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ABSTRACT

This booklet commemorates the General Educational Development (GED) Testing program's first 50 years. Included are the following: (1) a description of a GED graduation; (2) reminiscences of three GED administrators; (3) success stories from five GED graduates; (4) descriptions of eight special GED programs; (5) an explanation of how the GED system works; and (6) a timeline of dates important to the program. The special programs described are as follows: (1) Georgia's tax credit to employers to sponsor GED students; (2) Delaware's GED program for state employees; (3) Hartford's comprehensive services provided by the Urban League, one of which is GED preparation; (4) Massachusetts's "Science Box" and "Math Jump Start Kit, collections of instructional materials particularly helpful to part-time adult basic education and GED teachers who have little time to explore their regional clearinghouse; (5) Pennsylvania's program to honor its outstanding students; (6) Florida's scholarship for adults who complete high school with at least a B average or score 277 or higher on the GED Tests; (7) Arizona's testing fee waiver program; and (8) Washington's program for GED students with limited English proficiency. (CML)

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AMERICAN COUNCIL
ON EDUCATION

GED TESTING PROGRAM

The First Fifty Years

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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GED
TESTING PROGRAM

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The First Fifty Years

Edited by

Colleen A. Allen and Edward V. Jones

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In commemoration of our golden anniversary year, this booklet offers a few glimpses of the GED program—several testimonies from graduates and caring professionals, a few examples of innovative state, province, and local activities, an overview of the system, and some highlights from our first half century. Obviously, these pages do not do justice to the range of people and accomplishments that have contributed to the GED program's 50 years of excellence.

The GED program represents an extensive national and international network of adult learners, teachers, chief examiners, local and state program administrators, state and provincial directors of adult education, and administrative staff at the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education. The tests themselves serve more than 800,000 adult learners annually and provide the vehicle for approximately one in seven high school diplomas awarded in the United States each year. In all, more than 12 million individuals have now earned GED Diplomas since the tests were implemented in 1942.

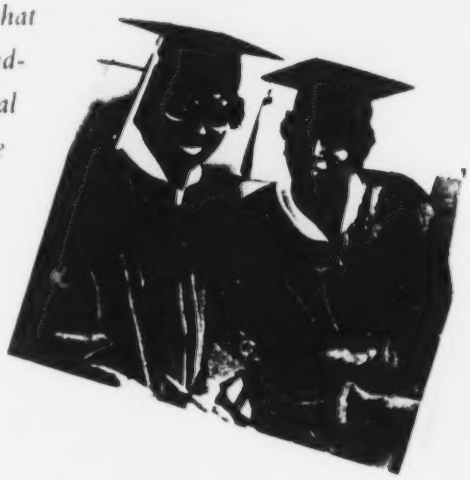
This size and complexity, however, is only part of the story for a program that counts its successes in human and personal terms, not simply in numbers and statistics. The GED program is an investment in human capital, and it attracts both students and professionals who are committed to human growth and development. Essential to these processes, and fundamental to a free society, is the opportunity to reconsider one's options in order to maximize one's potential. As North America's primary second chance education program, the GED Tests reflect and extend this basic democratic value.

In the first 50 years, we have established a strong foundation. Changes will occur in the future, as they have throughout our history, but our fundamental nature and purpose seem well established for the foreseeable future. The GED program was founded on a good idea—no less valid today than it was a half-century ago—and this idea continues to make a significant difference in the lives of literally millions of adult learners.

Jean H. Lowe, Director
GED Testing Service

Touching Our Lives

The GED Program is about people. . .it is the human element that matters most. This section contains the reminisces of three GED administrators and their memories of candidates and graduates. A final selection shares the reflections of a GED graduate, now a college professor, who offers his support and appreciation to "GED teachers, administrators, testing officials, clerks and secretaries, and all the others who play a role in the GED process."



Images From A GED Graduation

by Cathy Erwin

Do the GED Tests touch people's lives? Come with me to a GED graduation and see for yourself. Suppose we arrive early and watch the families of the graduates assemble.

A young Hispanic father tries, with little success, to keep a toddler quiet while juggling a diaper bag and baby. As he gropes for a lost pacifier, beads of sweat appear on this forehead. We notice a man with thick, tanned arms and a tattoo visible just beneath his shirt sleeve; we think he drives a truck. His wife fans the increasingly close air of the hall with a xeroxed program. An elderly African American woman folds her gloves carefully inside an ancient black "pocketbook" as she takes her seat. We notice that her hands are hardworking, worn.

The hall is full of people, too full. Custodians are dispatched for folding chairs. Children fidget. Then the band begins and all eyes turn to the back of the hall and the graduates. They are of all ages, some young and some not so young. One woman, mortarboard askew on her salt and pepper hair, is helped to the front seats, marked for the graduates with paper streamers. The ceremony begins.

We say the *Pledge of Allegiance* and the band strikes up *The Star-Spangled Banner.* I feel that all that is good and right and hopeful about America is represented in this hall: the opportunity that ordinary people have to fulfill extraordinary dreams. An evening school teacher performs; she sings (appropriately) *The Impossible Dream.* The requisite forgettable speaker admonishes the graduates to hold the memory of this moment forever, a charm against inevitable hard times to come. The assembly is restive.

Then, the diplomas! The cheers! Yes!

A school administrator makes closing remarks. She tells of her own mother, who got her GED at age 45 and then went to nursing school. Now she runs a free clinic, cajoling doctors she has worked for to donate their time to serve the health needs of some of the poorest in the city. She tells the graduates, "Now that you have made it, give something back."

Her remarks remind me of the story a college president related, of his older brother who had to leave school to help care for the family's younger children. Eventually, he was able to take the GED Tests and went on to become an engineer and to manage his own firm. The president spoke eloquently of his gratitude for the second chance that the GED Tests had given his brother, and of his own determination to make the same opportunity available to others.

Watching the proud graduates and their families, it occurs to me that institutions that work pretty well for some of us, fail others. Because the graduates have overcome these failures, we—our country—will be stronger. America does not derive its vitality from its "institutions" or "systems;" rather, from the diversity and empowerment of its people.

Do the GED Tests touch people's lives? Go to a graduation. See for yourself.

Cathy Erwin has worked for the Texas Education Agency for nearly 18 years. She has spent her entire career working with adults and has directed the Texas GED program for 16 years.

The GED Testing Program: The Most Rewarding Thing I Do

By Marjorie M. Mastie

Sometimes you just know you're in the right business.

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...An auto worker in his forties, made eligible to keep his job of 25 years by passing, weeps.

...Three farm women, who came in together and practically held one another's hands for moral support, complete the test and leave to resume their lives with a new sense of pride.

...A judge orders GED testing for an underage youth as the only acceptable evidence that he is serious about his future and can remain out of jail.

...A silver-haired, 84-year-old women completes her GED Diploma to set an example for her grandchildren, who are threatening to drop out of school.

...Flowers arrive for an examiner. The handwritten card says, "I owe it all to you. Thanks for not letting me quit."

...A small group of young people from a local residential treatment center for substance abusers sit in a room together for the private testing which offers them yet another kind of second chance at life.

...A former examinee, calling to have a transcript sent to a college, takes the time to tell us how obtaining the GED Diploma has changed her life.

...A leather-jacketed young man, scheduled to leave Michigan for Texas in just hours, comes in to complete the test that he hopes will allow him to start his job there and support his young wife and baby.

...A very pregnant young woman, appearing to be just days or hours from delivery, comes in for the test that she hopes will provide the diploma she had missed earlier and will assure her a place in the "real world" when life lets her enter it.

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Twice a week they come, sometimes as many as 50 at a time. And every time I walk into the room to check with Vi Berchert, our local GED Examiner, on how things are going, I just stand and marvel. Emotions are palpably near the surface here: the room is quite literally alive with courage and hope and dreams.

I remember our beginnings. Directors of adult education in our ten constituent local school districts had asked our Intermediate District, a county-level service agency, to initiate GED testing when both other sites in the county discontinued it. My careful analysis of this possibility turned up dozens of objections, problems, and easy excuses for not getting into the business. Then Bernie Gucwa, a chief examiner and respected colleague at another Intermediate District, said to me honestly, "Marge, I can't say it won't be tough. It demands a long-term commitment. Professional colleagues in your building may resent the presence of your examinees on their turf. Building maintenance problems will be blamed on your examinees. You will need to be vigilant over the rigorous test security requirements. You'll wonder how you can ever continue to meet the demands of the program on top of your other responsibilities. Your ethical and professional depths will be sounded often. But I promise you, it will become the most rewarding thing you do."

He was right—on all counts! Now, nine years later, we test about 1,500 examinees each year and issue transcripts on examinees going back nearly 40 years. We test off site at the jail, a school for adjudicated youth, three prison settings, and a forensic psychiatry program. And above all else, we are changing lives for the better, one person at a time.

Most of my assignment as supervisor for assessment services is to provide support for the assessments going on in our local districts, from training teachers in the art of day-to-day performance assessments in their classrooms, to helping local citizens and educators understand and use the results of their standardized achievement tests. It is important work, and in an abstract way I can feel that I am helping to improve the outcomes for students here. But when I need to see and touch and feel success, there is nothing like walking into that GED testing room.

Marjorie M. Mastie is Supervisor of Assessment Services and Chief Examiner for Washtenaw Intermediate School District in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ms. Mastie started the GED program in 1983 and has seen it grow from serving 64 people the first year to more than 1,500. She has authored numerous publications and is currently President of the National Association for Assessment in Counseling.

GED Graduates I Have Known

By Mary Ann Corley

As I reflect over 20-plus years of working in GED programs, first as instructor, then as supervisor, and now as GED Administrator, what stands out in my mind is individual students. Nothing else really matters—not the mountains of paperwork, not the understaffed offices, not the hearings in which we fight for the GED program's rightful place in the education arena. Only the students matter, because we have touched their lives and, in turn, they have touched ours forever, indelibly imprinting their stories on our hearts.

How do we forget the 72-year-old man who returned to school to work toward his GED Diploma and whose 92-year-old mother remarked on his graduation night that she had waited 55 years to see this "kid" walk across the stage?

Or the husband and wife team who helped each other through GED classes, took the tests on the same day—nervously awaiting their test results in the mail—and then walked across the stage together on graduation night with their children and grandchildren cheering them on from the audience? They bought each other GED rings to celebrate.

How do we forget the unwed teenage mother who earned her diploma and landed a decent paying job after spending four years on welfare? She cried all the way through her graduation ceremony.

Or the young man, incarcerated for a drug-related crime, who earned his GED Diploma while in prison and then helped other inmates study for the GED Tests with the hope that they would all find decent jobs "on the other side" after they were released?

And how do we forget the patient in a state hospital with a traumatic head injury who needed a scribe to record his test answers for him and for whom the hospital staff held a big blow-out party to celebrate his earning the GED Diploma?

Or the mother-daughter team who earned their diplomas together?

These are the people who make our jobs more than a paycheck—who make our jobs a way of life. In the grocery store, we idly converse with the cashier and learn that her teenage son just dropped out of school. We give her our work number and encourage her to refer him to our program. At a neighborhood party, we recruit potential GED teachers and examiners. At the movies, we run into someone who says,

Country-Western music star Waylon Jennings accepts his GED Diploma.

"Hey! You're the lady who administered the GED Tests to me. Guess what? I passed!"

Every time we wonder why we're in this business—the least acclaimed segment of the education profession and the least funded—we are reminded by a recent graduate that the GED Diploma turned his/her life around. We know how important the education of adults is, not only to the individual, but also to the family, the workplace, the community, the country, and, ultimately, the planet. We wish that school boards and legislative bodies across the country also recognized the importance of educating adults.

At every GED graduation ceremony, we get choked up. We don't mean to, but there's such pride shining on the graduates' faces—some tears, too—and we're happy to have played a small part, to have made a difference, to have touched some lives. The graduates, in turn, have touched our lives. Yes, we're hooked. And we wouldn't trade it for the world.

Mary Ann Corley is the GED Administrator for the state of Maryland. She has worked in adult education for more than 20 years. In 1988, the ABE/GED program she supervised received a national award from the U.S. Department of Education for Outstanding ABE/GED Program.

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Reflections of A GED Graduate

By Luke Barber

Luke Barber, G.E.D., B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

When people learn that I am a college professor of philosophy and humanities, few of them are surprised to find that I have several diplomas. They do not wonder that I have a B.A., an M.A. or even a Ph.D. These are, after all, the supposed academic credentials for a person in my profession. Most people are quite surprised, however, to discover that the diploma of which I am most proud is my GED. The GED provided me with both the foundation for and the doorway to all of my subsequent educational experiences, and I am, therefore, a very strong supporter of the work of those individuals who have dedicated themselves to the field of GED education and testing.

For this reason, the results of last year's study by University of Chicago economists James J. Heckman and Stephen V. Cameron disturbed me greatly. Even more distressing, however, were the conclusions drawn from this study in the many newspaper reports and editorials which followed. In newspapers across the country, the value of General Educational Development high-school equivalency diplomas was called into question. My concern was not so much for those millions of us who are the holders of high-school equivalency diplomas, for we have experienced the great value and benefits of our GEDs first-hand, and no research studies or negative newspaper editorials can possibly contradict our own reality. My concern was not even focused so much on the many potential GED candidates who could be in some way discouraged by the Heckman and Cameron study or by the negative press. My own guess is that these individuals will heed the advice of counselors, recruiters, teachers, friends, and others in the field who recommend that they prepare for and take the GED Tests, much more readily than they will be influenced by the findings of a couple of university social scientists or some poorly informed newspaper editors. My main concern was and is for the many good people who work so diligently to help others obtain the GED Diploma—the administrators, the teachers, the testing officials, the clerks and secretaries, and all the others who play a role in the GED process.

As a teacher, I know how easy it is—even under the best of conditions—to become discouraged about my work. The process of educating others is fraught with difficulty and doubt, especially self-doubt. Rarely a day goes by that I do not wonder about my work and about the success that I am having with my students. To have the value of my work questioned by others—particularly by those who do not have a clear grasp of what I am about, what challenges I face, or what I am endeavoring to accomplish—can be a doubly defeating experience. In my estimation, this is the most disheartening possibility resulting from the Heckman and Cameron study—that GED officials and educators may feel defeated about their work.

Before I received my GED, I did not feel that I had managed one single successful experience in education. Completing my GED not only provided me with a sense of accomplishment, but also with feelings of self-esteem and hope. Today I still see the GED as the most hopeful of diplomas. Had I never completed other degrees or obtained a high-paying job, I still would have been better off for having experienced this one success. I still believe wholeheartedly in the extrinsic value of the GED; however, if there were no rewards beyond the success that comes with completion of the GED itself, that would be enough to justify work in GED education. The word "education" is derived from the Latin ***educare***, which means to care for and cause to grow. Helping others to obtain their GED Diplomas is an act of caring which necessarily facilitates growth. In short, it is education at its finest.

Luke Barber is a philosopher, storyteller, author, speaker, and higher education consultant. He has been a professor of philosophy and humanities at Richland College in Dallas, Texas for nearly two decades.

Success Stories

Success is a journey and not a destination. . . A GED Diploma provides a solid educational foundation upon which many have built successful lives. Sometimes it is also the culmination of a long-term dedication and commitment. What follows are the stories of five GED graduates. This is only a small representation of the more than 12 million GED graduates.

Former High School Drop-Out Turned Writer-Filmmaker

by John Fusco

In 1976, I dropped out of high school in Waterbury, Connecticut as a result of substance abuse and lack of direction. My childhood dream of filmmaking was buried under self-doubt and well-intentioned practical criticism from those around me and so I pursued the next best creative endeavor I could find—music. My ability to compose song lyrics landed me in several bands and I began some lean years of playing clubs by night and working in factories by day. I was a machine operator at numerous factories throughout Waterbury.

While operating machines, I used to write, shoot and edit films in my head, and slowly, my first love began to resurface. I was becoming angry at the turn my life had taken, and knew deep down inside that it was time to change or never rise above what I was doing. I decided one summer day while in the factory—the day after my grandfather, John Fusco, Sr. died—that I would get my GED Diploma and go on to college.

Writer and Filmmaker John Fusco

I visited Don Gonillo, Director at Waterbury Adult Education, and told him my story. He spent time speaking to me about turning my life around and made it all seem tangible. I registered with the Waterbury Adult Education Program and attended classes at Croft. The program was a second chance for me, and it was inspiring to be in the company of others trying to turn their lives around. There were no fun-and-games—this was a new lease on life, and I absorbed all I could in preparing for the GED Tests. I passed the exam and entered Mattatuck Community College in 1980. After making the Dean's List my first year, I was accepted into New York University's School of the Arts, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dramatic writing.

When I was a film student, my first screenplay won the nationwide FOCUS film festival in 1983. And in 1984, my second screenplay, "Crossroads," won the award again. "Crossroads" went on to become a major motion-picture released by Columbia in 1986.

My other writing credits include, "Young Guns," "Young Guns II," and most recently, "Thunderheart" and "The Babe," both of which I also produced.

GED Recipient Overcomes Barriers And Succeeds

by Sherry Royce

Irene Allen was the child of addicted parents who had no time for her. Her father was abusive and her mother simply did not want her. At the age of three months, she was given over to the care of a strict grandmother. Her grandmother was very religious and loved her the best she knew how. Irene remained with her until she was returned to her mother.

Irene had few friends with whom to share her childhood and no one who cared about how she felt. At age 11, she started running away from her troubles by experimenting with alcohol and drugs. By the time she was 16, she was an addict. When she became pregnant, her mother threw her out of the house. Thereafter, Irene floated from place to place, sure that no one wanted her.

She moved from one abusive relationship to another. At age 23, Irene found herself an uneducated, addicted parent of three. Her children were the only positives in her life, but as a result of her lifestyle, they were taken away from her. She had now lost her only source of love. In 1987, realizing that she was at a dead end, Irene entered Eagleville Hospital. She was deeply depressed and very angry, but ready to work.

Irene Allen

Irene had attended eight different schools before she dropped out in the ninth grade because of pregnancy. At Eagleville Hospital, when she was told that she had to go to school again, she was scared. She felt she"didn't have the ability to learn." Her intake forms identified her as having borderline intelligence. However, once her mind was cleared of drugs, her fear of learning was conquered and she began to excel in her studies. Irene set many goals, including building up her self-esteem and furthering her education. She identified getting her GED as the best way to reach these goals.

When Irene passed her GED Tests, she was overjoyed at this "big accomplishment." She then attended a local vo-tech in order to acquire typing and business skills. While presently working toward her goal of becoming a registered nurse at Montgomery County Community College, Irene raises two of her children and is looking forward to a new baby.

Irene spends time with her children each day doing homework and teaching them the value of education. She is also active in her church, working along with her pastor to bring her message of sobriety and education to those parishioners who are in need. She leads by example, sharing her new insights, values, and goals. She will not forget the past, but now focuses on the future—a future filled with love, education, and hope.

Sherry Royce is President of Royce & Royce, Inc., an adult education and literacy staff and curriculum development firm. She has directed over 35 ABE special projects and has authored numerous articles and texts.

Sight-Impaired Adults Win As Students

by Chris Lamb

Anthony Della Sala waited 39 years for this day.

Pat McKillop shared it with her children and grandchildren.

Terry Haire brought 25 friends.

They were three of the 10 visually-impaired students who received their high school equivalency diplomas last fall at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind through a joint program offered by the Florida Division of Blind Services and Daytona Beach Community College.

A few already had graduated from the program, but this ceremony marked their achievement with pomp and circumstance. Family and friends turned out to congratulate the graduates.

Ms. Haire's seeing-eye dog dressed for the occasion by wearing a graduation cap.

Before she began working toward her GED Diploma, Ms. Haire, who works in the pre-admissions department at Florida Hospital in Altamonte Springs, said she had not had any formal education. Now she's a high school graduate. "This is the hardest thing I've done in my life," she said.

Mrs. McKillop married before she finished high school. The 55-year-old Daytona Beach woman now has five children and six grandchildren who came to see their mother and grandmother graduate.

It was hard work. She worked all night at the rehabilitation center and then went straight to class.

"It makes it worthwhile. So many kids accept a high school diploma as fact," said Mrs. McKillop, who was hired by the rehabilitation center on the condition that she get her GED Diploma.

Tracey Smith of Pensacola became the first in her family to graduate. Her fiance captured the moment on video. She is sending it to her family with a message. "I'm sending a video of the graduation back home. My mother is trying to get my sisters to go back to school," she said.

Anthony Della Sala was scheduled to graduate in 1952. It didn't happen until 1991. Better late than never, he said. "I feel outstanding," he added.

Virginia Jalo of Ormond Beach, who's in her 40s, currently is a student at Daytona Beach Community College. When people used to ask her if she had graduated from high school, she said that sometimes it was simpler just to lie. She doesn't have to do that anymore. "I don't have to lie anymore," she said. This day comes once in a lifetime."

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Canadian Graduates Encourage Others To Enroll In GED Program

by Lynn Pierpoint

GED graduate Brenda Wilson

Vicky Logue-Fasquel of Minto, New Brunswick, is the first female firefighter to be hired by Transport Canada at the Fredericton Airport. Vicky, the mother of two, was once a high school dropout. She now holds a $32,000 a year job as a firefighter, thanks, she says, to earning her high school equivalency certificate by passing the GED Tests.

"Getting the GED has changed my life. I needed high school to qualify for a job with the Federal Civil Service. GED gave me that qualification. I now have first year university as well. I would say to others, 'GED can open many doors. Don't let anything or anybody stand in your way of getting your GED.'"

Just as enthusiastic is Brenda Wilson, Secretary of the Mayor and Assistant Town Clerk of the Town of Oromocto, New Brunswick. She feels that earning her GED Certificate has given her a brighter future and a real feeling of fulfillment. She says that it has given her the confidence to go to college and enroll in accounting and computer courses. These have been invaluable to her in her work.

"I would definitely encourage all men and women who have not received their high school diplomas to enroll in the GED program. It certainly left me with a feeling of fulfillment—a completion of one level of learning so there could be an advancement to other levels. With the GED Equivalency Certificate, you can set goals and take charge of your life, and your future can only look brighter."

As a result of the enthusiasm of graduates like these, the New Brunswick program has experienced very strong growth over the last several years.

Lynn Pierpoint is Special Projects Officer with the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labor and editor of the New Brunswick newsletter, GED News.

GED Graduate Devotes Life To Educating Others

by Colleen Allen

Wilfred Kanji Nakamura dropped out of high school in 1941 in order to help support his family due to the death of his father. He obtained a special permit to work as a minor. In 1945 he was drafted and sent to Schofield Barracks in Oahu. Despite his Japanese descent he was almost sent to Iwo Jima.

In 1947, Mr. Nakamura was discharged. It was at this time that he took the GED Tests and passed. Upon earning his GED Diploma he entered the University of Hawaii at Manoa and worked toward his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. His undergraduate studies included courses in Latin and Greek philosophy and Japanese studies. Mr. Nakamura comments that he loves languages, especially Latin, and he frequently regaled his captive audiences with his erudite phrases and quotes. He continued his education and in 1954 received a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from Vanderbilt University and a professional teaching certificate from the Peabody College of Education.

He spent the next ten plus years teaching civics, Latin, Shakespeare, and English composition at high schools in Chicago and later in Hawaii. After his first administrative position as a vice principal he embarked on a career with adult education and in 1969 became the principal of Waipahu Community School for Adults. Mr. Nakamura has spent the last 23 years in the field of adult education.

His program at Waipahu, which began with 129 adult education classes, has grown to serve more than 8,000 students and offers over 500 classes. He is most proud of having introduced the Competency-Based High School Diploma Program in Hawaii's adult education program. With the help of a task force including people from the community and government officials he developed a pilot program which was approved by the State in 1980.

Just retired as of June 30, 1992, Mr. Nakamura says his immediate plans are to loaf, but that he may go ahead and get a degree in international law.

Colleen Allen is the Exexutive Assistant at the GED Testing Service. Gladys Naitoh of the Hawaii Department of Education submitted the information for this article on Mr. Nakamura.

Special Programs

GED programs involve more than testing. Different states and local communities have developed a wide-range of GED extension and spin-off activities including financial support for students and programs, testing of special populations, career counseling, teacher staff development programs, combining GED instruction with other services, and special projects of various kinds. The articles in this section describe just a few of these activities.

Georgia Offers New Tax Credit For Adult Basic Skills Education

by Alvin F. Anderson, Sr.

With Georgia's industry facing the challenge of global competition and rapid technological change, unskilled and undereducated employees are at an increasing disadvantage. As Governor Zell Miller has said, "Literacy skills and adult basic education are of critical importance to Georgia's future economic well-being." Thanks to a new program that began the first of this year, Georgia employers who would like to be part of this "solution" now have strong incentive to do so.

The new Georgia tax credit for Adult Basic Skills Education, passed by the General Assembly and signed by the governor last year, provides for a credit of one-third of the cost of education, or $150.00, whichever is less, for each full-time equivalent student in an approved basic skills education program provided or sponsored by an employer. Basic skills education, which includes GED instruction, is designed to enhance reading, writing, and mathematical skills up to and including the twelfth grade level. Employers who have the necessary resources and facilities can opt to provide this service themselves. Others can use the services of schools, colleges, universities, or other agencies that offer basic skills programs which are approved by the Department of Technical and Adult Education.

To qualify for the tax credit, employers must provide instruction without charge to employees. Direct instructional costs including instructor salaries, instructional equipment, and supplies such as computer software and textbooks may be applied toward the tax credit.

Alvin F. Anderson, Sr. is president of Albany Technical Institute in Georgia. Prior to this recent appointment he was the Director of Assessment and Evaluation and the GED Administrator for the state of Georgia. Mr. Anderson has more than 20 years of experience in education administration.

Delaware Institutes GED Program For State Employees

by Fran Tracy-Mumford

The state of Delaware has instituted a special GED Testing program for state employees who do not have high school diplomas. This project, which is a collaborative effort of the Department of Public Instruction, the Delaware State Employees Personnel Office, and the Delaware Development Office, not only provides a benefit to this group of workers, but also serves as a model for other Delaware employers.

This program, which targets 300 state employees, operates on release time at selected locations during November and March. Employees needing instruction are referred to adult education classes. Special funding through the Delaware Development Office has enabled the Department of Public Instruction to employ a counselor to assist state employees who are potential GED candidates. The state of Delaware pays for testing.

The state employees GED program has a number of additional distinctive features, including promotion of "GED Test Days" through circulation of flyers, graduation ceremonies involving the governor and the state superintendent of schools, intensive recruiting, and extensive personal and telephone counseling. The program is intended to increase the productivity of state employees through improved literacy and basic skills.

Fran Tracy-Mumford is the GED Administrator for the state of Delaware. Ms. Mumford has been responsible for adult education programs in Delaware since 1987.

Urban League Provides Range Of In-House Services To Students In Connecticut GED Program

By Esther Bush

Hartford, Connecticut, is the fourth poorest city in the nation. In addition, Hartford is plagued with all of the related problems associated with an area marked by poverty, high unemployment, low work skills, and poor housing. Hartford's school dropout rate is currently 10.1 percent. There are 134,739 residents of the Hartford service delivery area who lack high school diplomas, including 43,412 who live in the City of Hartford.

One agency that is helping to reduce the number of Hartford adults without high school diplomas is the Urban League of Greater Hartford's Adult Center of Education (ACE). ACE is a comprehensive adult basic education (ABE), literacy, GED preparation, life-skills, and External Diploma program which has been operated by the Urban League since 1980.

Since its first graduation in 1981, ACE has helped more than 800 high school dropouts obtain their high school diplomas, with higher than average GED test scores. Many other ACE students, some of whom were high school graduates, have been able to improve reading, math, and job readiness skills in order to qualify for entry into colleges, jobs, or training programs.

Although ACE has always had certified instructors, a full-time counselor, and an individualized curriculum based on student needs and learning styles, this hasn't been enough. Inner-city students have a multitude of other problems affecting their lives. A high school diploma may be a goal, but there are often substantial barriers standing in the way of that goal. ACE students may be homeless, have substance abuse problems, or have just been released from prison. They may be HIV-positive. They may also be battered wives, have other family or emotional problems, or have sick children.

In 1985, when funding was cut, ACE was forced to move into smaller quarters. So it moved into the same building as its parent organization—the Urban League. According to ACE Director Beverly LeConche, "that's the best thing that could have happened to us. We had been operating in a vacuum. Now we had all of the Urban League's resources accessible to our students on-site."

Indeed, one of the things that has made ACE such a unique and successful program is that its students have all of the Urban League's programs and other services available to help them. The Urban League's Employment, Education, Housing, and Health departments provide on-site support services such as housing, counseling, job placement, AIDS education and information, bus tokens, day care referral, and college scholarship information.

But even with all of these resources, a high school diploma is not always a quick process. According to LeConche, "some government agencies think we can enroll non-readers into our program, teach them to read, help them complete a high school diploma, and place them in a job—all within six months. It just doesn't work that way." The process takes time in order to be effective.

Employment is always the end goal, but at ACE the emphasis is on "career" and "life." If a high school (GED) diploma is equivalent to 12 years of education, then students must be given the time to learn or improve the skills necessary to complete the GED Tests. Through its life-skills classes, ACE also teaches "process" skills such as how to think, how to make decisions, and how to get along with people. Many of ACE's students are city or state welfare recipients. The end goal is not to place them in a minimum-wage job with no future, but to help them prepare for a career.

ACE graduates know that earning a high school diploma is a new beginning—a chance to renew alliances within their communities, a reason to encourage their children and other family members to pursue education at any age. ACE students have learned that self-preservation begins with education and that education is a process that can be rewarding year after year, and more importantly, from generation to generation.

Esther Bush was named President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Greater Hartford in 1989. A ten-year veteran of the Urban League movement, Ms. Bush has been instrumental in establishing programs ranging from improving human relations and race relations to providing special services to youth groups. She has served as a professional educator and chaired a New York City Board of Education Committee to reduce bias in textbooks and instruction.

Teacher-Made Materials Support GED Math And Science Instruction In Massachusetts

by Barbara Garner and Mary Jane Schmitt

In January 1990, the Massachusetts Department of Education launched SABES, the System of Adult Basic Education Support. SABES has the four-fold mission of providing staff development, program development, a clearinghouse, and a field-based research capacity to ABE, GED, and ESL programs throughout the state. One aspect of the SABES clearinghouse that has really caught on is specialized collections that travel to learning centers for extended use. So far, two of these, "The Science Box" and "The Math Jump Start Kit," are wonderfully accessible resources for part-time ABE/GED teachers who have little time to explore their regional clearinghouse.

The Science Box

Teachers in Massachusetts are finding that the GED student population has shifted to include more students who have never attended school in the United States and have had minimal formal education in their native countries. These students typically have little understanding of basic science concepts such as gravity or friction and lack the context they need to succeed on the GED Science Test. Teachers began to request help.

SABES identified an experienced GED teacher, Janet Stein, who had handled this problem in her classroom, and asked her to develop her approaches so that others could use them. Janet delved into the world of K-12 science for hands-on activities that use equipment you can find around the house—tennis balls or M & Ms for example—to demonstrate basic concepts. She not only taught these concepts, she also turned to relevant reading passages in GED preparation texts so students could immediately apply the scientific information they had learned.

For this project, Janet drafted ten units, some of which she had previously tested in her classroom. Included in each unit are teaching activities, references to relevant reading passages in GED preparation texts, and a crash course in the unit's content for teachers. Ten GED teachers around the state read and pilot-tested the units, then submitted written feedback and attended a half-day feedback session. Two former high school science teachers provided technical support.

The curriculum will soon be ready for dissemination. The teachers who provided feedback will join Janet and a SABES trainer to develop a training design.

They will provide training and act as a resource to other teachers on how to use the science curriculum, materials, and relevant texts; GED programs can borrow a set for use in their programs while another set will remain in the library for reference.

The Math Jump Start Kit

The Math Jump Start Kit was a SABES pilot project for exposing teachers and students to new and exciting materials. The clearinghouse staff worked with ABE/GED math teachers to come up with a list of $200 worth of relevant and innovative math instructional materials. These materials were assembled in a box under five categories: Problem Solving; Math Manipulatives; Calculators and Estimation; Basic Skills; and Teacher Resources. Feedback sheets were attached to the materials, and Jump Start Kits were delivered to five local programs. The kit remained at each program site for two months; trainers met with learning center teachers for a couple of hours to discuss ways to use the new materials. These workshops were the key to getting the contents of the Kit out of the box and into the hands of the teachers. So far, more than 30 centers in Massachusetts have used the Kit.

For more information and bibliographies about the specific contents of the science box and the math kit, contact the SABES Central Resource Center at World Education, 210 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111.

Barbara Garner presently serves as Program Development Coordinator for the SABES Central Resource Center at World Education. Mary Jane Schmitt helped initiate the SABES Project and currently serves as Math, Science and Technology Specialist for the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education. Both started as teachers in ABE and ESL and are committed to practitioner sharing as a catalyst for change.

Pennsylvania Honors Outstanding GED Students At Legislative Luncheon

by Joan Y. Leopold

Each year, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, and the Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education (PAACE) co-sponsor a Legislative Luncheon to kickoff the state's annual Mid-Winter Conference on Adult Education.

The Legislative Luncheon honors the ten outstanding ABE/GED students and the ten outstanding postsecondary students in Pennsylvania. State representatives and senators are invited to attend the luncheon with student honorees from their districts, and citations are presented by both legislative members.

In September, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education invites teachers, administrators, and tutors to submit names of students in their programs who have overcome great difficulties to participate in adult basic education classes or to achieve their GEDs. PAACE invites postsecondary teachers, professors, and administrators to submit names of their students who have overcome hardships to achieve college credits or degrees. These nominations are then reviewed and ten ABE/GED students and ten postsecondary students are selected.

PAACE also sends information to state legislators and asks that they present citations to the students in their districts. The legislators are seated with the students and their families at the luncheon, where the presentations are made. The Appropriations Committee, the Education Committee, and the Labor Committee of the House and Senate are also invited, since ABE/GED programs are impacted by these groups.

A special interest group of PAACE called GED Alumni annually presents a check to the student with the highest GED score. We honor this student as the valedictorian of Pennsylvania.

This very successful program showcases our students and teachers and enables legislators to see tangible results of their support.

Joan Y. Leopold is Director of Education at Harrisburg State Hospital in Pennsylvania. She is Executive Director of PAACE, a member of the Governing Board of the State Coalition for Adult Literacy, and a member of the Advisory Board of Pennarama (an educational cable television station). She has developed several curricula for special needs adults including one on voter education.

Local Business Awards Scholarships to Adult Learners in Florida

by Ray L. Graber

According to the 1990 Census, Polk County, Florida, has 31,499 adults age 25 and above with less than a ninth grade education. In addition, 4,098 young adults between 16 and 19 years of age are not enrolled in school and/or do not have high school diplomas. In 1991, only 1,164 Polk County Florida adults tested for the GED with a passage rate of 70 percent. Because of its concern over such depressing statistics, Paragon Cable Company in Lakeland, Florida, has implemented an adult and community education scholarship program (PACES) to increase awareness of illiteracy and to promote higher learning.

PACES is an awards/recognition program for adults who complete adult high school with at least a "B" average or score 277 or higher on the GED Tests. Twelve finalists are chosen each year based on their scores or grades, a 250-300 word essay, and community involvement. Winners are selected by a panel of community leaders and are presented at an awards banquet.

PACES, now beginning its fourth year, has received many accolades from the local school board for pioneering support of adult and community education and for offering college scholarships to adult graduates. Paragon Cable has received more positive public recognition for PACES than for any other single activity.

In 1990, PACES won one of six "Affiliate of the Year" awards from the Learning Channel. PACES has also received acclaim from local literacy providers including the Florida Literacy Coalition and the Florida Department of Education, in addition to the Polk County School Board. Some scholarship winners explain that they would be unable to afford to go to college without the award from PACES. Finalists attending the banquet who do not win scholarships often write or call Paragon Cable to say, "Thank you for making me feel like a winner."

No other business or industry in our area offers scholarships to adult graduates. PACES is an ideal public affairs catalyst to help communities make a difference.

Ray L. Graber is Vice President and General Manager of Paragon Cable. He is a long-time supporter of adult learning. Mr. Graber is a member of the United Way Board of Directors and sits on an ad hoc committee that is formulating an adult mentors group to teach at-risk children to read.

Arizona GED Candidates and Graduates Benefit from Scholarships

by Pat Taylor

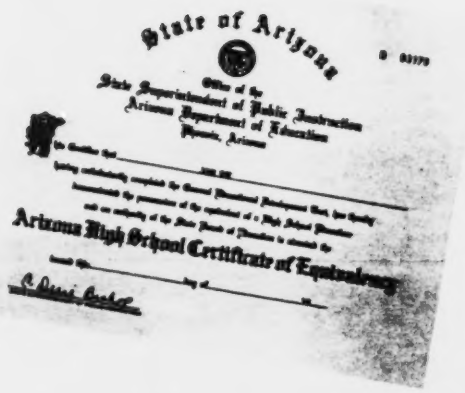
Raymond wandered into the Mesa Community College testing center one morning at 7:30. He wore soiled clothing, was unshaven, and had unkempt shoulder-length hair. He questioned Ms. Betty Mills, the chief examiner, about taking the GED Tests. He apologized for his appearance and explained that he had no money for testing. He had been employed in the Midwest, but had lost his job during a company layoff. Since he did not have a high school diploma, he was unable to secure a job; however, he had recently been offered a trade position with the provision that he acquire his GED Diploma. Ms. Mills explained to Raymond the eligibility requirements, testing procedures, and test fee-waiver policy. She suggested that he might want to shower and shave before his testing session.

An hour later, a thoroughly drenched young man entered the testing area clean-shaven and with a short, ragged looking haircut. The change was so dramatic that Ms. Mills did not immediately recognize Raymond. When she did, Ms. Mills offered him a fee-waiver form and testing materials—and testing began.

Two years ago, it became apparent throughout the state that many applicants could not afford the $15.00 Arizona GED testing fee. As a result, an offer by the Soroptimist International Club of Mesa to provide GED testing fee waivers was readily accepted. A billing procedure was initiated at the college to expedite the waiver process. Applicants in the Mesa area who can show proof of need now qualify for this scholarship money.

The Tempe Soroptimist International Club provides a fee-waiver service to adult students in Tempe and the surrounding area. This group is currently inviting other clubs in the metropolitan area to join in its efforts for promoting this educational project. The Kachina Junior Women's Club in Scottsdale has recently joined the ranks of those assisting Arizona's needy GED applicants by adopting a similar program.

Today, more than 60 examinees have successfully participated in the scholarship program coordinated by Ms. Mills at the Mesa Community College GED Testing Center. Scholarship recipients are often invited to share their experiences and educational goals at club meetings.


State of Arizona

Arizona High School Certificate of Equivalency

At an annual GED Examiner's Institute, Ms. Mills shared the scholarship concept with the chief and alternate examiners. Many community colleges and secondary schools in the state now provide fee alternatives. Ms. Arlene Jorgensen, Chief Examiner at Central Arizona College, has coordinated efforts to establish four or five full-time GED scholarships each semester for top-scoring GED recipients. She stated that adult learners rarely have a chance to apply for scholarships. She wanted them to have the same opportunity that is available to traditional high school graduates. The program, now in its fifth year, is a noteworthy example of GED examiners' dedication to assisting adult learners to achieve their goals.

The Jim Dewberry Memorial Fund at Pima Community College also enables GED recipients to apply for financial assistance. This memorial fund, created in honor of a former state legislator, may be applied to college tuition and/or textbooks.

Raymond, by the way, received his GED certificate and has since completed his three-month apprenticeship with Honeywell, Incorporated, in Mesa. He now has a permanent position as an inspector in the metallurgy department. Raymond recently contacted Ms. Mills to express his appreciation and to share his achievement with the person who had cared enough to make it possible.

It is rewarding to experience the joy and excitement of those who have worked so diligently to achieve their goals. In Arizona, we will continue to expand our present scholarship and foundation programs to assist GED applicants statewide.

Pat Taylor is Director of the Arizona GED Testing Service. She has worked in adult education for 26 years. Prior to joining the Arizona Department of Education, Ms. Taylor was a Director and Dean at a community college in Kansas.

Teaching Limited English Proficient GED Candidates in Washington

by Suzanne M. Griffin

There are more than cultural differences between limited English proficient (LEP) and native English speaking students seeking a GED Diploma or certificate. Limited English proficient students frequently have a higher educational level than their native English speaking counterparts. They average ten to 12 years of education in their native countries. Some have graduated from high school, while others have some college education. Most LEP examinees do not suffer from the "failure syndrome" that affects many GED candidates who, for varied reasons, did not complete high school. LEP examinees with strong educational backgrounds often have high self-esteem, positive attitudes about their own learning abilities, a good general knowledge base, and strong study skills.

Changing demographic characteristics of Washington State's adult basic education (ABE) enrollment over the past decade have focused more attention on LEP enrollees in ABE and GED classes. Last year, students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes accounted for nearly 40 percent of our ABE population. In response to the education and training needs of these students, we have intensified our efforts to prepare them for the GED Tests.

Tacoma Community House, a community-based agency which targets services to refugees and immigrants, offered a GED course for limited English proficient students from 1982 through 1984. More than 100 students from 20 different countries took this 300-hour course. Nearly half of them took and passed the GED Tests.

The Tacoma Community House ESL/GED course has given rise to an ESL/GED curriculum which is still in use throughout Washington state. The instructional guide for this curriculum, ***Preparation for the GED Examinations for Limited English Proficient Adults***, is available for the cost of printing and mailing from Alan Waugh at ABLE Network in Seattle (206/587-3881). In part, the curriculum addresses the need to teach American values so that non-native English speaking students can interpret test items in their proper context. This guide is not intended to serve as the only GED instruction for LEP students. Successful GED instructional courses for LEP adults currently offered at our community and technical colleges are also taught by individuals with ESL teaching experience.

Perhaps current national awareness of the important role that limited English proficient adults and youth will play in tomorrow's workforce will encourage others to adapt to the needs of these students. To gain entrance to many educational, vocational, and employment programs, individuals must possess a GED Diploma or a traditional high school diploma. A specialized curriculum to help prepare LEP students for the GED Tests will not only serve individuals, but also the communities in which they live.

For additional information on ESL curriculum and instruction, write to Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Attention: Director of Field Services, 1600 Cameron Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2751.

Suzanne M. Griffin is the State Director of Adult Education in Washington. Prior to her current appointment, she served as the GED Administrator and has been involved in numerous refugee programs.

Inside One Dupont Circle

How the System Works: From One Dupont Circle to the Testing Center

by Joan Auchter and Lisa Richards

Since 1942, the GED Tests have served as an avenue to personal satisfaction as well as wider occupational and educational opportunities for more than 12 million adults in the United States and Canada who left school before completing grade 12. Providing these adults with an opportunity to reach their goals is the work of thousands of teachers, GED Examiners, and administrators at the local, state, provincial, territorial, and national levels.

The GED testing program belongs jointly to the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education and to each state, provincial, or territorial department or ministry of education. Each party—from the local school system or community college that provides preparation and testing in the community to the state, provincial, or territorial GED Administrator to the staff at GED Testing Service—is connected to the others through established channels as well as more informal ties based on our shared interests in promoting second chance education to millions of adults without high school diplomas.

The remainder of this article will describe the workings of the system. What are the functions of the GED Testing Service? How are the GED Tests produced and distributed? Who decides what questions are included on the tests and how are individual items selected? How are the tests administered?

The process begins with the GED Testing Service at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC and extends throughout the United States and Canada and, increasingly, to the rest of the world.

The GED Testing Service: How does it Function and What Does it Do?

Broadly speaking, the GED Testing Service is organized to accomplish four somewhat technical functions: program and contract services, policy research, data services, and test development. These four functions, which are described below, are in addition to extensive promotion and public relations activities which involve a major commitment from GEDTS as well as from states, provinces, and territories.

Program and Contract Services

On a contractual basis, through its Program and Contract Services unit, GEDTS, establishes Testing Centers, appoints chief examiners, provides testing materials, and in some cases, test and essay scoring and record keeping services to approximately 3,500 Testing Centers throughout the United States and Canada. In addition, GEDTS monitors these centers for security and services to examinees; responds to policy and procedure questions from states, provinces and territories as well as local programs and federal agencies; and responds to other inquiries from GED candidates, teachers, parents, businesses and the media.

Policy Research

Through its policy research unit, GEDTS collects and analyzes data relevant to GED candidates and graduates, evaluates the policy implications of research findings, prepares research reports and policy papers, and makes oral and written presentations on a variety of issues. Audiences for these presentations are both internal—including GEDTS and ACE staff—and external—including GED Administrators, directors of adult education, teachers, researchers and policy makers in education, business, industry, government, and postsecondary education.

Data Services

Through its data services staff, GEDTS scores GED Tests for the military through DANTES, federal prisons, and several other special programs and populations. It also scores essays for testing centers, scans item tryout data, and supports a variety of other projects such as the recent GED candidate study.

Test Development

Since the test development process at GEDTS is the function most directly related to the tests

themselves, and the one which most directly affects GED candidates, this process will be described in more detail than the other functions. The test development unit consists of a director, a psychometrician, one test specialist for each of the five content areas, a test production manager, a test production coordinator, a network systems analyst, and a network coordinator. In addition, the test development staff depends significantly on the work of outside consultants in each phase of test development.

Each year, external specialists write questions, called test items, for new operational forms of the GED Tests. A large number of questions must be constructed because, even with good writers, many questions fail to meet the high standards established for usable test questions. GED item writers must be content specialists with both teaching certification and secondary teaching experience in the disciplines for which they are contracted to write questions. By actively advertising for additional writers, the test specialists make a vigorous attempt to contract with a cross-section of educators who represent the diversity of the United States and Canadian population with respect to ethnic origin, gender, and geographic location.

Each potential question is subjected to a seven-stage review process before it can be included in an operational test for field-testing. First, each question is reviewed by the appropriate test specialist for content accuracy, fairness, and general quality. The question is either accepted, edited by the test specialist or contracted writer, or rejected. Second, each question that has passed through the initial review and revision is submitted to three independent external content reviewers, consultants who are content specialists in the appropriate discipline. These content reviewers judge the accuracy, clarity, suitability, and cognitive level of each question using a specific question rating form. The GED staff makes every effort to recruit a cross-section of educators to ensure multicultural, multiracial, and geographic diverse representation during these reviews. Concurrently, the director of test development conducts the same review. Third, the GED test specialist revises or rejects each question based on the content reviewers' comments. After the question has survived the content review, it then goes to a fourth stage, the measurement/bias review.

During the measurement/bias review, each question undergoes thorough scrutiny by two independent, external, specially trained psychometricians. These reviewers judge each question to ensure sound test construction, to detect item flaws, and to ensure fairness by using the GED measurement review checklist. GEDTS currently uses a pool of 10 psychometricians. Concurrently, the GED psychometrician conducts the same review. Fifth, the test specialist once again revises or rejects each question based on the measurement reviewers' comments. Sixth, each question is reviewed by a professional external editor/proofer for grammar, spelling, vocabulary, format, and surface errors. During the seventh, or final phase, the GED test specialist revises the question based on the editor/proofers' comments.

After questions survive this screening, they are field-tested through administration to GED examinees. Field-test questions are embedded within the operational forms of the tests. These questions are not counted in determining the examinees' scores. This field testing occurs at every testing session and every examinee participates. Because new operational test forms are developed each year, this activity is ongoing. This examinee administration is also used to screen questions for age bias that can't be identified during the high school administration.

Based on the fairness and performance statistical results of the examinees' performance on the field-test questions, the GED staff selects questions for the operational and practice test forms. For each test in the battery, items for the new forms are selected to match the test specifications defined by the content test specifications. Preliminary versions of the new test forms are reviewed by the GED test specialists, psychometrician, and director of test development. Next, at least two weeks prior to an on-site review of the forms, the preliminary forms and final form review sheets are sent to three separate external content specialists who serve as final form reviewers and to two psychometricians who serve as measurement reviewers. During the on-site review, the content reviewers either accept the preliminary form, or make recommendations for changes or substitutions of either individual items or sets of items. Finally, the test specialist meets with the psychometrician and the director of test development to review all revisions based on the final-form reviewers comments.

Once operational forms have been approved and printed, they are administered to a random stratified sample of high school students prior to graduation in a standardization administration and are equated to the 1987 norming sample. At the same time, the GED staff monitors the skills levels of high school seniors to determine if performance changes have occurred that could require a new standardization or norming of the tests. The tests are then ready to be administered to

GED readers carefully review examinees' essays.

the GED examinees as they try to qualify for a high school equivalency diploma.

Out in the World: What Happens after the Tests are Developed and Distributed?

At each state, provincial, or territorial department or ministry of education, the GED Administrator is responsible for the GED testing program's operation within that jurisdiction. The GED Administrator sets policy, trains GED Examiners, issues score reports and maintains permanent GED records and establishes fees for testing and credentials. He or she ensures that GED Testing Centers within that jurisdiction operate in accordance with GEDTS policies as well as laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Canadian Human Rights Code.

The people who are in closest contact with GED examinees are the GED Chief and Alternate Examiners and their staffs. Examiners provide assistance to those applying to take the tests as well as accessible testing locations and testing schedules. They are sources of information about test preparation and special accommodations for people with handicaps and disabilities. Examiners are on the front line; they experience first hand the joys and frustrations of the GED testing program.

Is there more that goes on out in the world than this? There is indeed. As the other articles in this booklet reflect, the GED program is basically about people and about opportunity. State and local programs recruit GED candidates and promote GED graduates. In between they provide a range of additional services including not only GED classes; but counseling, placement, and referral services; scholarships and fee waivers; and sometimes child-care and transportation. They must also be advocates and lobbyists for resources and policies which support adult learners. The states, territories, and provinces together with local programs are on the rim of the wheel where "the rubber hits the road." They have direct contact with GED candidates where ultimately the program claims its success and failures.

The GED program is a good idea—an idea which has grown into a comprehensive network of services to adult learners. Its success depends heavily on common purpose and careful communication. These will continue to be GED trademarks during the second fifty years.

Joan Auchter is Director of Test Development at the GED Testing Service. Lisa Richards is Coordinator of Program Services at the GED Testing Service.

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GED: 50 Years At A Glance

by David W. Stewart

1942
A special committee surveyed the problem of "accrediting" educational achievement of men and women in the armed services and recommended that United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) "provide the opportunity for soldiers, not registered in courses but who have had comparable training experience, to take the appraisal tests and to receive proficiency ratings if they achieve a satisfactory standing..." Recommendation was accepted by the Army, and the War Department agreed to fund test development.

1942
Directed by Ralph Tyler, a civilian team of test experts, under a USAFI contract administered by the University of Chicago, developed high school equivalent tests, "to measure the outcomes and concepts of a four-year high school (non-technical) education in the five areas of curriculum taught in all such high schools throughout the country, namely English Grammar, Social Studies, Natural Sciences, Literature and Mathematics." An additional subgroup developed provisions for (1) credit for military training, (2) general educational placement, and (3) credit in special fields. The plan included a battery of tests of general educational competence – the forerunners of today's GED.

1943
First GED Tests standardized through administration to 35,000 seniors in 814 high schools in 48 states.

1943-1944
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) held a meeting of representatives of regional accrediting associations and others representing secondary education to discuss policies for accrediting military educational experience for secondary schools. Two important principles emerged: (1) no school credit would be given for training which had no counterpart in civilian life, and (2) credit for acceptable specialist training courses would be granted, if competence could be established from the serviceman's record.

1945
At the request of the War Department's Joint Army-Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, and with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, ACE established the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experiences (CASE). Its purpose was to act as a continuing civilian agency and clearinghouse to cooperate with all educational institutions, associations, and organizations concerned with the evaluation of military training and experience of service personnel and veterans. Thomas Barrows was named CASE Director; Cornelius (Neil) Turner was named Associate Director.

1945
ACE's Veterans' Testing Service (VTS) was formed to provide U.S. colleges and universities with the GED Tests for veterans and civilians.

1946
Declaring that "systematic education normally is best obtained by regular attendance in high school," CASE recommended that GED Tests not be administered or recognized as a measure of high school equivalence until after an examinee had graduated.

1947
First GED Tests for "servicemen on active duty, veterans, and non-veteran adults" administered jointly in the early fall of 1947.

1947
Neil Turner left CASE to establish and direct the New York State High School Equivalency Testing Program.

1948
ACE transferred VTS to newly formed Educational Testing Service (ETS).

1951
Comprehensive evaluation of GED Tests accomplished by Paul Dressel under the auspices of ACE's Committee on Measurement and Evaluation.

1953
Responsibility for supervising GED Test administration in VTS agencies determined to rest with state departments of education.

1954
ETS returned administration of VTS to ACE.

1955
ACE conducted first renorming of GED Tests.

1955
Ralph Tyler published *"Fact-Finding Study"* of USAFI, which included first major evaluation of GED Testing program.

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1957
GED Tests made available to federal correctional and health institutions.

1959
Number of civilians taking the GED Tests exceeded the number of military personnel examinees for the first time.

1963
Name of VTS changed to GED Testing Service.

1964
Authorization given by CASE to develop GED Tests in Braille, in large print, and on records and magnetic tape.

1965
Number of persons that had taken GED Tests since inception of program exceeded 1 million.

1966
GED Tests made available to American civilians and foreigners at overseas centers.

1966
New Adult Education Act provided federal funding for ABE and GED programs.

1967
ACE conducted second renorming of GED Tests.

1967
College-level GED transferred to Educational Testing Service (ETS) as College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

1969
Nova Scotia became first Canadian province to offer GED.

1971
First conference of GED Administrators held in Washington, D.C.

1971
Spanish-language GED Tests made available to official test centers.

1971
Requests from the Ministry of Education, Province of New Brunswick, and Department of Education, Province of Quebec, to develop a French version of GED Tests approved.

1972
ETS published study by A. T. Sharon on validity of GED for admission of non high-school graduates to higher education.

1974
California became last state to join GED program under a bill signed by Governor Ronald Reagan.

1976
GED examinees exceeded 5 million.

1977
Third renorming conducted and 12 new forms of GED Tests prepared for introduction in 1978.

1979
Official GED Practice Test developed to inform GED candidates, teachers, and publishers about the content of the GED Tests.

1980
First study of GED candidates in the United States completed.

1984
First issue of GED *Items* produced; a free bi-monthly newsletter that includes GED Testing Service updates, program news, teaching tips, and graduate success stories.

1987
Fourth renorming and second major revision of GED Tests accomplished. Essay included as part of Writing Skills Tests for the first time.

1989
First major marketing program for GED launched.

GED Pioneer Neil Turner

1990
GED Profiles: Adults in Transition, a series of research papers on GED candidates and graduates is released.

1990
First GED examiner staff development video produced and distributed.

1990
Pioneer Neil Turner dies.

1991
Number of GED ***examinees*** exceeded 16 million.

1991
Number of GED ***graduates*** exceeded 12 million.

1992
GED celebrates its 50th anniversary!

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